

Director Emphatic: NSA Does Not Bug Americans

By Daniel F. Gilmore
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Vice Adm. Bobby R. Inman, director of the National Security Agency, was emphatic: his super-secret spy agency is not bugging any American anywhere in the world.

In a rare statement from the largest of all U.S. intelligence groups, Inman told the Senate Intelligence Committee Thursday: "There are no U.S. citizens now targeted by NSA in the United States or abroad."

"None," he added, for emphasis.

Inman, who only recently took over NSA, said current agency regulations to prevent circulation of information accidentally gathered on Americans are "stringent, strict and well-complied with."

"All information on Americans inadvertently acquired is destroyed and not disseminated outside the agency. There are no loopholes," he said.

The NSA, which is reported to spend between \$1.5 billion to \$3 billion a year on its highly technical operations, is charged with protecting the security and codes of U.S. governmental agencies and with monitoring and deciphering the communications of foreign powers.

It uses sophisticated means ranging from satellites to the proverbial transistorized olive in a dry martini.

Over the past few years, NSA activities were opened to a limited view by congressional investigative committees which found the agency also was monitoring and filing material gathered from the interception of telephone calls and telegrams to and from Americans.

The Senate Intelligence Committee said the NSA in the 1950-60's obtained copies of millions of telegrams sent to, from or through the United States.

Inman was among a group of officials

who testified before an intelligence panel subcommittee working on legislation to protect Americans from their own spy agencies.

CIA Director Stansfield Turner argued there should be separate legislation, distinct from domestic strictures, for devices used to gather foreign intelligence.

He was supported by witnesses from the Defense Department and State Department intelligence bureaus.

But Sen. Daniel Moynihan (D-N.Y.), recent addition to the Senate committee, aimed a tirade against the Russians for listening in on American telephone calls in Washington, New York, and elsewhere.

"The Russians are over on 16th Street bugging our telephones right now," he said of the Soviet Embassy.

Reminded that the Soviets were protected by diplomatic immunity, Moynihan retorted: "We can't put them in jail but we could get them the hell out of the country!"

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